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To the Editor
STAR-LEDGER
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Newark, New Jersey 07101

Dear Editor:-

Hadren Simmons' (May 4, 1992) positive statement that all vary in this country was worse than segregation invites another opinion. From time immemorial, up to and through the eighteenth century, human slavery was customary in many parts of the world. Slavery of equatorial Africans flourished with the complicity of the native African chiefs who willingly sold their tribesmen and women to Arab slave traders. Slavery was not invented by the American colonies in 1619.

Neither I or Hadren Simmons experienced slavery. I doubt that he is old enough to have experienced the rigid segregation and discrimination that still characterised American life through the first four decades of this century.

In 1865, thousands, perhaps millions of human beings were set free. They were set free physically, but were denied any meaningful participation in the economic life of the country which was developing at lightning speed. Along with this denial of opportunity for the freed slaves and their descendants, emigrants from all over Europe were invited to build the railroads, man the mines, steel mills, factories and all types of commercial enterprises. This complete denial of opportunity persisted for nearly three-quarters of a century and, in my opinion, is the root cause of the disturbances that plague us now.

In a democracy, it is certainly a crime to deny to millions of free men, the freedoms and opportunities enjoyed by other millions of their fellow citizens, experiencing this denial may be more devastating to the individual than slavery. Who knows?

We have sown the wind. It is not now wholesome to recall, compare and assess blame. It is the business of all of us, to do whatever we can to avoid the destruction of a whirlwind reaping.

Yours truly,
D. J. Henderson